

Air Force to hold meetings on proposed F-16 transfer

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii – The U.S. Air Force is holding a series of public meetings in the Anchorage and Fairbanks, Alaska, communities to invite public comment on potential environmental impacts of a proposed transfer of an F-16 aircraft squadron.

The Air Force is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement on a proposal to relocate the 18th Aggressor Squadron from Eielson Air Force Base, near Fairbanks, Alaska, to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, in Anchorage, Alaska. Under the proposal, the Air Force would plan to re-size the remaining wing overhead and base operating support functions at Eielson in fiscal year 2015. The EIS will also consider a No Action alternative, which is to keep the squadron at Eielson. No decision has been made on the proposed move. The EIS is part of a process required of federal agencies under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Air Force is proposing the move to reduce defense spending and support congressionally mandated deficit reductions, as outlined in the Budget Control Act, and as part of its priority to prepare for future challenges and protect the broad range of U.S. national security interests.

The 18th Aggressor Squadron consists of 18 assigned F-16 aircraft, three back-up F-16s, and associated support and maintenance Airmen. The proposed relocation includes removing 623 military personnel from EAFB in fiscal year 2014, transferring approximately 542 positions to JBER, and eliminating 81 positions. Beginning in fiscal year 2015, the Air Force proposes an additional reduction of approximately 749 military and 179 civilian authorizations at EAFB appropriate to the command structure required for the remaining operations. Current planning estimates call for a proposed end state of approximately 769 appropriated funds personnel at EAFB after FY15 (559 military members and 210 civilians).

If the proposal is ultimately approved, Eielson will continue to host the Red Flag and Distant Frontier training exercises with the 18th Aggressor Squadron operating out of JBER under one of two possible alternatives. Under Alternative A, the F-16 aircraft would fly to and from exercises using aerial refueling. The participating F-16 aircraft would not routinely land at Eielson for refueling. Under Alternative B, the 18th Aggressor Squadron would deploy to Eielson for the duration of the exercises.

Under either alternative, the aircraft would operate in the same air space as currently used for Red Flag and Distant Frontier exercises. Transient aircraft and personnel from outside of Alaska participating in these exercises would continue to deploy to and operate out of Eielson.

To effectively define the full range of issues to be evaluated in the EIS, the Air Force will determine the scope of the analysis by soliciting comments from interested local, state and federal agencies, as well as members of the public. The Air Force's public scoping meetings will provide the public with an opportunity to learn about the proposal and participate in the process by providing input. Public input supports the Air Force in making informed decisions.

During the scoping meetings which are open to the public, the Air Force will describe the NEPA process and outline opportunities for public involvement throughout the process. Scoping meetings and the dates and times for each meeting are provided below.

6:00 – 9:30 p.m. with the presentation at 7:00 p.m.	February 4, 2013	Alaska State Fairgrounds 2075 Glenn Highway, Hoskins Building Palmer, Alaska
6:00 – 9:30 p.m. with the presentation at 7:00 p.m.	February 5, 2013	Tyson Elementary School 2801 Richmond Avenue Anchorage, Alaska
12:00 – 3:30 p.m. with the presentation at 12:30 p.m. AND 6:00 – 9:30 p.m. with the presentation at 7:00 p.m.	February 6, 2013	Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge Edgewater and Jade Rooms 4477 Pikes Landing Road Fairbanks, Alaska
6:00 – 9:30 p.m. with the presentation at 7:00 p.m.	February 7, 2013	North Pole High School 601 North Pole High School Boulevard North Pole, Alaska

Each scoping meeting includes a half hour presentation and approximately three hours for an open house and oral public comments. The presentation will provide information on the purpose and reasoning behind the F-16 relocation proposal and an explanation of the NEPA process. The public will be provided an opportunity to provide oral comments on the analysis process to help identify potential environmental impacts. Community members will be able to relay information directly to Air Force members during this time.

Public comments are encouraged and will be accepted either verbally or in writing at the scoping meetings. Comments may also be provided via mail to the point of contact listed below. The Air Force will accept comments at any time during the environmental process. However, to ensure the Air Force has sufficient time to consider public input in the preparation of the Draft EIS, please submit comments to the below point of contact by March 1, 2013.

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